TITLE OF THE INVENTION

MULTI SPIN SLOT GAME

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention:

[01] The present invention is directed to a method, device, and computer readable storage medium for implementing a slot machine game with a new and improved mechanism for triggering spinning of reels.

Description of the Related Art:

[02] Slot machines are a popular gambling game found in casinos. One disadvantage of current slot machines is that if the first symbol is a blank, then the player typically will lose, but the player must still wait until the second and third reels have spun. Further, slot games in which a player can play multiple lines are becoming more popular with players and more profitable for casinos.

[03] What is needed is a new variety of the game that can be more profitable for the casino, as well as in a form that some players may prefer over a standard slot game.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[04] It is an aspect of the present invention to provide improvements and innovations in slot machine games, which increase player enjoyment and casino profitability. The above aspects can be obtained by a method that includes (a) displaying a first symbol; (b) displaying a plurality of second symbols, if the first symbol is a predetermined symbol; and (c) displaying a plurality of third symbols for each second symbol which forms a predetermined combination with the first symbol.

[05] These together with other aspects and advantages which will be subsequently apparent, reside in the details of construction and operation as more fully hereinafter described and claimed, reference being had to the accompanying drawings forming a part hereof, wherein like numerals refer to like parts throughout.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[06] Further features and advantages of the present invention, as well as the structure and operation of various embodiments of the present invention, will become apparent and more readily appreciated from the following description of the preferred embodiments, taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings of which:

[07] Figure 1 is a first screen shot illustrating an example of the present invention, according to an embodiment of the present invention;

[08] Figure 2 is a second screen shot illustrating an example of the present invention, according to an embodiment of the present invention;

[09] Figure 3 is a flowchart illustrating a method of implementing the present invention, according to an embodiment of the present invention;

[10] Figure 4 is a block diagram illustrating an example of hardware used to implement the present invention, according to an embodiment of the present invention;

[11] Figure 5 is a block diagram illustrating an example of hardware used to play the game over a computer communications network, according to an embodiment of the present invention; and

[12] Figure 6 is a flowchart illustrating a method of allowing for respins, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[13] Reference will now be made in detail to the presently preferred embodiments of the invention, examples of which are illustrated in the accompanying drawings, wherein like reference numerals refer to like elements throughout.

[14] The present invention relates to slot machine games and improvements thereof. The present invention provides for a slot machine game that spins a first reel, and if a winning combination is possible, spins additional reels, and possibly subsequent reels thereafter.

[15] The easiest way to describe the game is by way of example, although the present invention is not limited to this particular configuration. A player bets $9 ($1 for 9 lines).

A first slot reel is spun. If the first reel is a blank, then the game is over and the player has lost his entire $9.

[16] If the first reel is not a blank, then it is possible for the player to receive a winning combination. So then a set of three second reels are spun. If all three of these second reels are blank (or do not otherwise form a predefined combination), then the game is over and the player has lost his entire $9. This is assuming that in this configuration there does not exist a winning combination comprised of only one symbol (such as a left cherry).

[17] If any of the second reels match the first reel (or can possibly form a winning combination with the first reel), then a set of three third reels are spun for each respective second reel. This set of third reels is associated with the particular second reel that matches the first reel. If all of the second reels match the first reel, then three sets of three third reels are spun.

[18] Once the third reels are all spun (in this configuration, the number of third reels spun can be 0, 3, 6 or 9), then winning combinations are identified. For each third reel spun, it is matched up with its respective second reel and the first reel. If this comprises a winning combination, then the player is paid that amount.

[19] Thus, by betting $9 in this triple/triple configuration, the player is effectively betting 9 lines at a time. However, this game progresses quicker than if the player played 9 separate slot pulls. Further, the player gets the excitement of getting multiple tries to make a winning combination. For example, if the player gets a wildcard on the leftmost symbol, then the player gets 3 tries (instead of the one try on a standard 3 reel game) to

get another wildcard. If the player does get another wildcard on the second set of reels, then the player gets an addition 3 tries to get another wildcard. Thus, the player gets more tries at making winning combinations. Typically, the player pays for nine lines up front.

[20] Figure 1 is a first screen shot illustrating an example of the present invention, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[21] A first reel 100 is spun which ends up in a blank symbol in this example. Because the first reel is a blank, the game is typically over and no other reels are spun. A payout chart 102 shows the valid payouts and how much they pay. A win meter 104 shows how much the current game pays. Since this current game pays nothing, the win meter shows 104. A total credit output 106 shows how many total credits the player has.

[22] Figure 2 is a second screen shot illustrating an example of the present invention, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[23] This round of the game proceeds as follows. A first reel 200 is spun which results in a double bar symbol.

[24] Since the first reel 200 has resulted in a symbol which can result in a winning combination, a second phase of the game is carried out. A second top reel 202 is spun which results in a blank symbol. Since the first reel 200 is a double bar and the middle top reel 202 is a blank, no winning combination can be formed on the payout chart. Thus the second top reel 202 does not trigger a respective third phase. Next, a second middle reel 204 is spun which results in a double bar symbol. Since the first reel 200 is a double

bar and the second middle reel 204 is a double bar, these two symbols can form a winning combination. Thus, this triggers a third phase of the game, to be described below. Next, a second bottom reel 206 is spun which results in a single bar symbol. Since the first reel 200 is a double bar and the second bottom reel 206 is single bar, no winning combination can be formed on the payout chart. Thus the second bottom reel 206 does not trigger a respective third phase.

[25] In this example, a third phase of the game is triggered by the second middle reel. A third set of reels is spun. A third middle top reel 208 is a double bar, which forms a winning combination with the first reel and the second middle reel to form a double bar/double bar/double bar combination. A third middle middle reel 210 is a 7 which does not form a winning combination. A third middle bottom reel 212 is a blank which does not form a winning combination. If the second top reel and/or the second bottom reel were to trigger additional third phases, then these additional reels would be spun and displayed as well alongside their respective second reel trigger. In the 1x3x3 example, the game can have a maximum possible 9 separate wins.

[26] Thus, the game is over and there is one winning combination, a double bar/double bar/double bar, which according to the payout chart pays $60. Thus the win meter 216 displays $60. Of course a game can have multiple wins and the win meter would display the total of each win.

[27] Any of the reels can be spun in any order. In a preferred embodiment, the left most reel is spun, then if possible the second reels are spun (simultaneously or sequentially), then if possible the third reels are spun (simultaneously or sequentially).

Alternatively, the left most reel can be spun, then the second top reel can be spun, and if a winning combination can be formed, then a third top top reel, a third top middle reel, and a third top bottom reel can be spun, and then the second middle reel can be spun possibly spawning another third set in this fashion, then the second bottom reel can be spun possible spawning another third set in this fashion.

[28] As can be seen by this example, there are total of 9 possible 3 reel combinations to achieve in the game, but not all 9 may occur at all times. Thus, typically a player can decide how much he or she wants to bet per line (or it can be predetermined at for example $1), and how many lines the player wishes to play (although preferably the player will play as many lines as available, 9 in the above example).

[29] In this manner, the player gets to play multiple lines of a slot machine faster than the prior art, and also gets the excitement of spawning additional reels if he or she catches possible winning combinations. It is also noted that the present invention is not limited to three reels, and any number of reels and any number of spawns can be used. For example, a slot machine can have three columns (a first, second, and third), but spawn four (or any number) of spins in that column. Thus, for example, the above example can spin a first reel, then possibly 4 more reels, then possibly 4 more reels for each of the previous 4 (for a maximum of 16). In addition, other numbers besides 3 of columns can be used, for example there can be 4 columns and any amount of reels in each column, for example, a first reel can spawn 3 more reels, each of which can spawn 3 more reels, each of which can spawn 3 more reels, for a total maximum of 27.

[30] Figure 3 is a flowchart illustrating a method of implementing the present invention, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[31] The method starts with operation 300, where a first reel is spun. The method then proceeds to operation 302, which checks if the first reel can form a winning combination (or otherwise meets a condition to trigger further spins). If not, then the method proceeds to operation 304, which ends the current game.

[32] If the check in operation 302 determines that based on the first symbol, the game should proceed to a second phase, then the method proceeds to operation 306 which spins a second reel. For each second reel spun, the method proceeds to operation 308 (and operation 310 and operation 312), which checks if the first and respective second reel can form a winning combination.

[33] If a winning combination can be formed, then the method proceeds to operation 310 which spins (or spawns) a set of third reels. The method then proceeds to operation 312, which determines if there is a winning combination based on the first reel, respective second reel, and respective third reel.

[34] Figure 4 is a block diagram illustrating an example of hardware used to implement the present invention, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[35] A processing unit 400 is connected to a ROM 402, a RAM 404, a network connection 406, a computer readable storage device (storing the program for running the game, i.e. on a CD-ROM, EPROM, or any other memory device), an output device 410, and an input device 412.

[36] Figure 5 is a block diagram illustrating an example of hardware used to play the game over a computer communications network, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[37] The present invention can also be played over the Internet, for example by an online casino. A game server 500 serves the game via a computer communications network 502 to a client 504. The client can download the game programming and run the application on the client's computer and just receive random results from the server. Alternatively, the server 500 can run the application and serve the output to the client 504. A user of the client 504 views the output and enjoys the game from a remote location such as his or her home. The reels can also be configured such that the player never gets a blank on the first (or any other) reel.

[38] In a similar but alternate way to display the present invention, all individual reels are displayed and none (or less than all) of the reels do not form combinations with more than one other set of symbols. For example, as game as illustrated in Figures 1 and 2 can be displayed by displaying 9 rows of 3 columns of reels. In this embodiment, the first column of reels all spins with a same result. In the second column of reels, the top 3 reels all spin with the same results, the middle 3 reels all spin with the same results, and the bottom 3 reels all spin with the same results. The third column of reels all spin with different results. This has a same result as the game previously described, but just illustrated in a different fashion.

[39] In a further embodiment, weighted reels can be used, as known in the art for example as described in US Patent No. 4,448,419 to Telnaes. The first reel, second reels,

and third reels, can be weighted as a first, second, and third reel is traditionally done. The first reel is preferably heavily weighted towards receiving any symbol, while the third reel is preferably more likely to get blanks than the other two reels. In this way, it will be unlikely that the player will get a blank symbol on the first reel, which would typically upset the player.

[40] Appendix A is one example of program code used to implement an embodiment of the present invention. This code was written in the MACROMEDIA FLASH ACTIONSCRIPT language, although of course any other programming language can be used and this represents merely one possible configuration.

[41] In another embodiment of the present invention, a sequence of reels (or other operations to determine random symbols) is spun. If the first in the sequence is a predefined symbol (or forms some type of combination with previous symbols), then a next symbol in the sequence is spun. If the next symbol is a predefined symbol (or forms some type of combination with previous symbols), then a further symbol is spun, and so on.

[42] When the sequence is over (typically when the last symbol is not a predefined symbol or does not form a combination which is defined to further the sequence), then the amount the combination pays out is determined. This can be based on the number of symbols generated in the sequence and/or a pattern or combination those symbols form.

[43] In yet a further embodiment of the present invention, reels of a slot machine can be spun, and one of the reels can be respun (automatically or manually) if a particular condition is satisfied.

[44] For example, three reels of a three reel slot machine can be spun to generate three symbols. If one of the three symbols comprises a predefined symbol (i.e. a wild card, a special respin symbol, or any symbol) then one or more other reels on the machine can be respun. Typically, a blank reel(s) will be respun. The respin can also be automatically triggered on a condition if the reels comprise a winning combination but for one of the reels. For example, if a player gets 7 7 blank, then the game can automatically respin the blank reel. As an example of another embodiment, if a player gets blank 7 wild, wherein the wild symbol also has a respin feature, then the blank symbol can automatically be respun. If the player gets blank blank wild, then both blanks can be respun. The designer of the machine can configure which conditions will trigger an automatic respin.

[45] In a further embodiment, a manual respin can also be triggered by a condition. A manual respin is one where a player can choose which reel to respin. For example, if a wild card has a respin feature, and a player gets 7 bar wild, then the player can choose which symbol (7 or bar) to respin.

[46] Figure 6 is a flowchart illustrating a method of allowing for respins, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[47] The method starts with operation 600, which spins reels of a machine (can be any number of reels). The reels can be electronic (i.e. a digital display) or physical reels.

[48] From operation 600, the method proceeds to operation 602 which analyzes the combination of symbols generated by the spins and determines if there is a respin opportunity. The conditions for a respin opportunity depend on the particular design choices made by the game designers.

[49] If the check in operation 602 determines that there is a respin opportunity, then the method proceeds to operation 604, which respins symbol(s). The symbol(s) to be respun depend on the particular design choices made by the game designers. If a manual respin is called for (as opposed to automatic), then the game waits for input from the player as to which reel(s) to respin.

[50] From operation 604, the method proceeds to operation 606, which analyzes the final combination of the game to see if the combination is a winning one. Winning combinations are paid according to a payout chart.

[51] It is also noted that any and/or all of the above embodiments, configurations, variations of the present invention described above can mixed and matched and used in any combination with one another. Any claim herein can be combined with any others (unless the results are nonsensical). Further, any mathematical formula given above also includes its mathematical equivalents, and also variations thereof such as multiplying any of the individual terms of a formula by a constant(s) or other variable.

[52] Moreover, any description of a component or embodiment herein also includes hardware, software, and configurations which already exist in the prior art and may be necessary to the operation of such component(s) or embodiment(s).

[53] The many features and advantages of the invention are apparent from the detailed specification and, thus, it is intended by the appended claims to cover all such features and advantages of the invention that fall within the true spirit and scope of the invention. Further, since numerous modifications and changes will readily occur to those skilled in the art, it is not desired to limit the invention to the exact

construction and operation illustrated and described, and accordingly all suitable modifications and equivalents may be resorted to, falling within the scope of the invention.